

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 277 942

CG 019 624

AUTHOR Dole, Arthur A.; And Others
TITLE When an Amateur Counsels: A Case Study of Retrospections and Verbal Responses.
PUB DATE Jul 86
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the International Congress of Applied Psychology (21st, Jerusalem, Israel, July, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cognitive Style; Counseling Effectiveness; *Counselor Evaluation; *Counselor Performance; *Counselors; Counselor Training; Graduate Students; Helping Relationship; Higher Education; *Psychotherapy; *Verbal Communication
IDENTIFIERS *Amateurism

ABSTRACT

Although there is some evidence that informally trained persons such as peers, housewives, bartenders, hairdressers, and others can be helpful to persons in distress, research on the cognitive and verbal behaviors of these amateur counselors is lacking. A single case design was used to compare a female lawyer without formal training in counseling (amateur) with an experienced female psychotherapist on verbal responses, retrospections, client responses, and client satisfaction. The amateur and professional counselors were both asked to counsel a male client experiencing a relationship problem with a supervising instructor. The client was a coached male graduate student who presented the same problem to each counselor. After each interview, the client and counselor retrospected. Transcripts were coded on six dimensions of retrospection and on 9 client and 14 counselor verbal response categories. Although the client's responses to both counselors were comparable, counselors differed from each other in style of thought and verbal behavior. The client considered the amateur counselor helpful, but he considered the professional counselor somewhat more helpful. (Author/NB)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

When an Amateur Counsels: A Case Study of Retrospections and Verbal Responses

Arthur A. Dole

Jeffrey Gold

Mark Nissenfeld

et al

University of Pennsylvania

Philadelphia, PA, USA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Arthur A. Dole

July, 1986

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Running head: Amateur Counselor

Presented at the 21st International Congress of Applied Psychology in
Jerusalem, Israel, July 1986.

ED277942

C6 019624

Abstract

TITLE: WHEN AN AMATEUR COUNSELS: A CASE STUDY OF
RETROSPECTIONS AND VERBAL RESPONSES

NAMES: ARTHUR A. DOLE, JEFFREY GOLD, MARK NISSENFELD AND
OTHERS, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,
PHILADELPHIA, USA

Using a single case design, we compared a female lawyer without formal training in counseling (AC) with a female experienced psychotherapist (PC) on verbal responses, retrospections, client responses, and client satisfaction. After each interview, a coached male graduate student who presented the same problem, AC and PC retrospected. Transcripts were coded on six dimensions of retrospections (Dole and others, 1982) and on 9 client and 14 counselor verbal response categories (Hill and others, 1981). Although client's responses to both counselors were comparable, AC differed from PC in style of thought and verbal behavior; client considered AC helpful, but PC somewhat more helpful. Implications for theory and practice were discussed.

WHEN AN AMATEUR COUNSELS: A CASE STUDY OF RETROSPECTIONS AND VERBAL RESPONSES

Suppose that a mature professional person without any formal training in counseling is asked to help a client. During the initial interview, what will her thoughts be like and what sorts of verbal behaviors will she use? How will her client respond and how satisfied will he be?

To explore these questions, we chose a small case design (Hersen and Barlow, 1978) and applied coding systems developed by Hill, Greenwald, Reed, Charles, and O'Farrell, (1981) for the objective analysis of verbal response and by Dole and Associates (1982) for classification of recalled cognitions (Kagan, Krathwohl, and Miller, 1983). In addition, we collected clinical observations and evidence of client satisfaction.

Previous Research

Although there is some evidence that informally trained persons (amateurs) such as peers, housewives, bartenders, hairdressers and others can be helpful to persons in distress, we are not aware of any published studies on their cognitive and verbal behaviors. For instance, Strupp and Hadley's (1979) outcome research comparing selected college professors with experienced psychotherapists does suggest that amateurs who are mature academics can be helpful to disturbed college students, but Strupp and Hadley did not examine process. After reviewing the literature, Durlak (1979) concluded that there was little or no difference between the outcomes of professional and alternative therapists. Similar results were found in a critical review by Berman and Norton (1985) who analyzed 43 studies. The authors summarized, "Current research evidence does not indicate that paraprofessionals are more effective, but neither does it reveal any substantial superiority for the professionally trained therapist." We are aware of few studies which compare the thoughts or behaviors of the participants.

Research Question

We compared an experienced woman lawyer [amateur counselor (AC)] without formal training in counseling with a female professional counselor (PC), each of whom interviewed a coached male graduate student. Our research questions were to what extent, if any, would AC differ from PC on (1) retrospections and verbal responses (2) the client's verbal responses and (3) the client's evaluations.

Method

Participants

PC had earned a master's degree in social work from Smith College in 1966 had 19 years experience in psychotherapy, supervision, and graduate instruction and was a doctoral aspirant in counseling psychology.

AC completed her law degree in 1974 and was a partner in a large law firm in Philadelphia. Although she had had no formal training in counseling, she had participated in family and individual therapy as a client.

The client, age 24, was a master's student in counseling at a large university. He did not know AC but did know PC.

The experimenter¹ was a doctoral student under the supervision of the investigators, who knew all the participants.

¹Marianna Cayten was the experimenter for this case. Marion Fetter and Jerilyn Rockett were research assistants.

Procedure

AC and PC were asked to participate in a study in which they would each counsel a male client for one 30 minute session. They were told that the client would expect assistance with his problems, and would be unaware that one was a professional counselor and one was not. They both were asked to audio tape the sessions.

The client was asked to be a client for two separate sessions, presenting the same problem in both sessions. His problem concerned his relationship with a supervising instructor.

AC counseled client first. After client left the session, she was asked to make her retrospections on a second tape recorder, following procedures developed by Dole and others (1982). A short interview was then conducted by the researcher to assess AC's reactions and perceptions of the process.

After the session, the client was asked to fill out a report evaluating the session. He was also interviewed by the researcher.

The second session took place the following day. PC was given the same instructions and followed the same procedure as AC. The client also was given the same instructions. In addition, in the follow-up interview, he was asked to compare the two sessions.

Data Sources

When the retrospections of AC were transcribed, there were 31 couplets and 14 retrospections; there were 87 counselor verbal behaviors and 140 client verbal behaviors. PC yielded 29 couplets and 20 retrospections, 56 counselor behaviors and 133 client verbal behaviors.

The six dependent retrospective measures were Time, Place, Focus, Locus, Orientation, and Mode. They are defined by Dole and others (1982) who also report their psychometric properties. The 14

counselor verbal behavior categories included Minimal Encourager, Silence, Approval-Reassurance, Information, Direct Guidance, Closed Question, Open Question, Restatement, Reflection, Interpretation, Confrontation, Nonverbal Referent, Self-Disclosure, and Other as defined by Hill et al (1981). Hill's system assigns each client response unit to one of nine verbal response categories: Simple Responses, Requests, Description, Experiencing, Exploration of Client - Counselor Relationship, Insight, Discussion of Plans, Silence, and Other.

Two independent raters, after training, attained acceptable congruence as measured by Cohen's Kappa and percent of agreement (at least 80% in all categories).

In order to test for the significance of the difference between AC and PC on responses, cognitions, and client verbal behaviors, Chi-Square was applied to each category.

Results

On the six dimensions of retrospections, AC differed significantly from PC on Time, Place, and Orientation; that is, she was more concerned about past, out-of-session, and personal events.

On the 14 categories of counselor verbal behavior, AC used significantly fewer Closed Questions and Restatements than PC and more Information Giving, Open Questions, Minimal Encouragers, Approval, Self-Disclosure, and Other. The client's response patterns to AC and PC did not differ significantly. In both interviews, approximately three quarters of his verbal responses were classified as Simple Description.

On the evaluation form, the client indicated that he felt "good" about the session with AC; that he made "moderate progress" that she understood his problem "moderately well," and gave "moderate" help. In contrast, he rated PC one scale point higher on these items. Overall, his score for PC was 37; for AC 25.

Discussion

Although AC did differ substantially from PC on 3 of 6 retrospective dimensions and 4 of 14 verbal categories, with a cross-sectional design, it is difficult to indentify the sources of the differences. Of interest also, the client maintained comparable verbal response patterns in both interviews.

An examination of the content of the transcripts and of the experimenter's report of follow-up interviews with the three participants suggests a tentative explanation. In brief, AC's private thoughts were philosophical questions about the client's problem. She posed a similar situation to herself and compared her reactions to his reactions. She then made a judgement, based on the identification with his feelings and behavior. Like the lawyer she was, she used questioning and information giving. PC's thoughts and verbal behaviors were more process-oriented. She was concerned with occurences in-session and the client's reactions to her attempt to empathize with him. The style of each counselor "definitely" was consistent with their particular training, according to the interviewer.

The client perceived AC as a trained counselor but preferred PC because she had a "higher energy level" and probed into underlying causes.

This study was repeated in seven other cases (Gold and Dole, 1986) with genders of the participants systematically varied. AC's differed from PC's inconsistently but distinctively. That is, there were varying patterns but few across-the-board differences on retrospections and psychologists' behaviors. As in the present case study, none of the seven clients differed on verbal behaviors whether responding to a professional or non-professional. When the satisfaction scores were aggregated, the non-professional counselors were rated by their clients as helpful but significantly less helpful than the professionals. They were considered especially helpful when the presenting problem touched on AC's experiences.

We conclude that the single case design was valuable, that recalled cognitions are an important aspect of counseling process, which can be fruitfully considered in supervision, that amateurs can sometimes be utilized for selected client problems, and that certain ways of thinking and acting (styles) may be a consequence of professional education.

References

- Berman, J. & Norton, N. (1985). Does professional training make therapists more effective? Psychological Bulletin, 98, 401-407.
- Dole, A.A. et. al. (1982). Six dimensions of retrospections by therapists and counselors--A manual for research. Journal Supplement Abstract Service, MS. 2454.
- Durlak, J. (1979). Comparative effectiveness of paraprofessional and professional helpers. Psychological Bulletin, 86, 80-92.
- Gold, J., & Dole, A.A. (1986). Professional psychologist vs. non-professional: Overt and Covert Behavior. Paper presented at Pennsylvania Psychological Association, Lancaster, PA.
- Hersen, M., & Barlow, D. (Eds). (1978). Single case experimental designs: Strategies for studying behavior. New York: Pergamon.
- Hill, C. E., Greenwald, C., Reed, R. G., Charles, D., O'Farrell, M. K., & Carter, T. A. (1981). Manual for the counselor and client verbal response systems, Columbus, O.: Marathon Press.
- Hill, C. E., Carter, J. A., & O'Farrell, M. R. (1983). A case study of the process and outcome of time limited counseling. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 30, 3-18.
- Kagan N., Krawthwhol, D. R., & Miller, R. (1963). Stimulated recall in therapy using video-tape: A case study. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 10, 237-243.
- Strupp, H. H., & Hadley, J. W. (1979). Specific vs. non-specific factors in psychotherapy: A controlled study of outcome. Archives of General Psychiatry, 36, 1125-1136.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Jackie Lepore-Navin, Mia Solomon, Marianna Cayten, Gretchen Hansen, Bonnie Stewart, Patricia Ferguson, and Suzanne Lion.

Table 1
Retrospections: Amateur vs. Professional Counselor

Dimension	Professional (N = 2000) ^a	%	Amateur (N = 1400)	%	χ^2
Time					
Past	42	2.1	378	27.1	
Present	1958	97.9	838	59.9	
Future	0	.0	183	13.1	8.21*
Place					
In	1925	96.3	924	66.0	
Out	75	3.8	476	34.0	5.55*
Focus					
Counselor	1033	51.7	652	46.6	
Client	757	37.9	667	47.6	
Coun./Client	163	.8	81	5.9	.29
Locus					
External	600	30.0	593	42.4	
Internal	1400	70.0	807	57.6	.55
Orientation					
Personal	17	.9	314	22.4	
Professional	1983	99.5	1086	77.6	4.36*
Mode					
Positive	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Neutral	1400	70.0	1267	90.5	
Negative	600	30.0	133	9.5	2.05

^aObservations per couplet X 100

*P < .05

Table 2

Frequencies of Verbal Responses: Amateur vs. Professional Counselor

Category	Amateur		Professional	
	f	%	f	%
Minimal Encourager	6	7	1	2
Silence	-	-	-	-
Approval-reassurance	3	4	-	-
Information	20	24	3	5
Direct Guidance	3	4	5	9
Closed Question	22	26	23	41
Open Question	12	14	6	11
Restatement	8	9	14	25
Reflection	-	-	3	5
Interpretation	-	-	1	2
Corporation	-	-	-	-
Non Verbal referent	-	-	-	-
Self-Disclosure	3	4	-	-
Other	7	8	-	-
TOTAL	84	100	56	100

$$\chi^2 = 32.35^{**}$$

Table 3
Frequencies of Verbal Responses by Client: Amateur vs.
Professional Counselor

Category	Amateur		Professional	
	f	%	f	%
Simple Responses	11	8	13	10
Requests	-	-	-	-
Description	116	83	115	86
Experiencing	1	1	1	1
Exploration of Client- Counselor Relationship	1	1	1	1
Insight	1	1	1	1
Discussion of Plans	6	4	2	2
Silence	-	-	-	-
Other	5	3	-	-
TOTAL	141	101	133	101

$$\chi^2 = .981$$